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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY
OF BUDDHIST RITUALISM: A MAHĀYĀNA
AVADĀNA ON CAITYA VENERATION
FROM THE KATHMANDU VALLEY

I.
Introduction

Most Buddhists who took refuge in the *triratna* were not monks or intellectuals but farmers, artisans, or merchants. Throughout its expansive missionary history, Buddhist tradition engaged the enthusiastic devotion of the householder classes through its inclusive hierarchy of teachings interlinked with a large repertoire of ritual practices. Buddhism attracted ascetics and intellectuals with myriad meditative regimens and vast doctrinal discourse; yet it also cultivated the great lay majority with simple teachings and devotional practices while meeting their specific pragmatic needs through ritual.

This study approaches popular Mahāyāna Buddhism through a study of rituals at *caityas* or *stūpas*, drawing upon a Newar Buddhist text and ethnographic research from the Kathmandu Valley.¹ The Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna traditions and a Hindu-Buddhist culture make Nepalese culture (until 1768, a term designating the Kathmandu Valley only) in many respects an enduring link to pre-Islamic South

1 The author would like to thank the Fulbright Fellowship program for support of the research underlying this study. Special acknowledgement goes to Subarna Man Tuladhar, Mani Gopal Jha, Labh Ratna Tuladhar, Robin Jared Lewis, and Gregory Schopen for their helpful readings of the translation. This article is dedicated to the memory of Karkot Man Tuladhar, an exemplary Newar Buddhist gentleman.

Asia.² Over the last decade, research on Newar Buddhism has begun to document this frontier “island” of South Asian Buddhism.³

*

In South Asia through the Pāla era, Buddhism comprised many coexisting spiritual approaches spanning Hinayāna and Mahāyāna (Dutt 1962: 176, 216). Its broad culture centered in *vihāras* supporting intricately conceived yet flexible disciplines aimed for the spiritual progress of both monks and laity. The historical enterprise of Buddhism comprised many mansions, each normative, with multiple traditions and multipraxis. The freedom engendered by Śākyamuni’s sanctioning autonomous, geographically-demarcated *saṃghas* made Buddhist history the cumulative product of numerous independent schools, institutions, and individuals (Lamotte 1988: 549). The diffuse definition and location of doctrinal authority in Buddhist communities – including the toleration of dissenting formulations – shaped the tradition’s multi-variant history (Davidson 1989). Requirements for a monastic lifestyle were set forth rather definitively, with the *Vinayas* providing a clear standard for the monks’ institutional and communal life (Wijayaratna 1989; Prebish 1975).⁴ The

2 Scholarly discourse in Buddhist studies should utilize “culture area” terminology and cease using “Indian” as a scientific label for pre-modern phenomena. Projecting the modern state boundaries backwards falsifies historical representation since Buddhism endures continuously outside its culture hearth zone up to the present in South Asia: to the north, in the Kathmandu Valley and Himalayas; to the far south, in Sri Lanka; to the east, in Burma, Thailand, and points along the Indian Ocean. (The tradition was also preserved far past the twelfth century in small communities lying in inner frontier “islands”: Orissa (Das Gupta 1969) and in port town communities (Tucci 1931).) To say that “Indian Buddhism was extinguished” is poor methodology and, in literal point of geographical fact, false. The more heuristic historical-geographical representation affirms that Buddhism did survive up to the present on the frontiers of the original Gangetic core zone. This redefinition of the historical situation opens up important perceptions such as seeing the reality of the later pan-Buddhist diaspora community that linked Central Asia, Tibet, mainland Southeast Asia, Indonesia. The international monastic/mercantile network is evident in the accounts of Chinese and Tibetan monks.

3 Recent studies have been published by Allen, Gellner, Greenwold, Lienhard, Lewis, Levy, and Locke. See the bibliography.

4 Ron Davidson’s article on scriptural authority (1989) is an excellent and wel-

saṅgha's designated responsibilities for propagating the *dharma* (recitations of *Buddhavācana*) and serving the lay community (public preaching and private instruction) were defined, by contrast, in very generalized terms, leaving the field open to broad interpretation.⁵

The Mahāyāna tradition's explicit recognition of legitimate, multi-level presentation of the *dharma* is expressed throughout the *sūtra* literature. Both the Prajñāpāramitā literature and Madhyamaka writings establish two levels of truth as the foundational framework of *dharma* discourse. The deconstructionist frame, while intellectually engulfing the worldly conventional, is itself bracketed by "a 'strong foundationalist' assertion of worldly and religious conventionalities (Jackson 1989: 584)." In the realm of provisional truth, the Buddha's (and bodhisattvas') "skill in means" in addressing the exact concerns and abilities of their audiences legitimated the tradition's textual multivocality, responding to a multiplicity of individual spiritual levels. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* expresses this quite explicitly:

I proclaim for their sakes a variety of teachings
 I am always considering in my own mind
 What I can do to bring the living beings
 To extend the unsurpassed way
 And speedily accomplish their Buddhahood.

(Quoted in Pye 1978: 59)

By establishing successive levels of legitimate religious understanding and practice for both laymen and monks, and by articulating many areas in which the *saṅgha* could ritually serve local communities, the Mahāyāna tradition engaged a large spectrum of society. Farmers, traders, and artisans had places in the great spiritual enterprise; householders' ritual offerings to temple-dwelling celestial Bodhisattvas as well as to their ritualists and teachers in the attending *saṅghas* sustained the tradition. By the Pāla period in northeast

come contribution to Buddhist historiography. The universal welcome accorded all Vinaya-observing monks fostered a pluralistic spiritual environment at major *vihāras* across South Asia. Thus, "Decorum was to be the backbone of the Buddhist tradition, right through the period of Vajrayāna monasticism. (*Ibid.*, 303)."

5 In Mohan Wijayaratna's excellent study of the early history of Theravada monastic life (1989), one can criticize only his neglect of ritual performance as part of the monastic role.

India (c. 750–950), this sort of *Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna* culture was predominant (Dutt 1962: 389). It endures intact (though in slow decline) in the contemporary Newar community, evolved to the point that *ācāryas* in the *saṃgha* perform a vast repertory⁶ of rituals, including a Buddhist version of *dharmaśāstra saṃskāras* (Lewis 1993a), *homa pūjās* (Gellner 1992), the *nitya pūjās* for temple-residing bodhisattvas (Locke 1980), and bodhisattva *ratha jātras* (Owens 1989). One case study in the successful historical emergence of Buddhism is its adaptation of universal teachings to *stūpa* making and ritual veneration.

II.

Caitya Veneration in *Mahāyāna* Buddhist Practice

For all Buddhist schools, the *stūpa* became a focal point and the singular landmark denoting the tradition's spiritual presence on the landscape (Dallapiccola 1980; Harvey 1984; Snodgrass 1985). Cross-roads where four highways meet are the ideal site for the *stūpa* (Dutt 1945b: 250). From antiquity, *stūpa* and *caitya* were used in Buddhist inscriptions and literature as synonyms. Poussin (1937: 284) has noted that a Dharmagupta *Vinaya* commentary suggested the existence of a technical distinction between shrines with relics (*stūpa*) and shrines without (*caitya*). I-Tsing indicates another Buddhist definition: "Again, when the people make images and *caityas* which consist of gold, silver, copper, iron, earth, laquer, bricks, and stone, or when they heap up the snowy sand, they put into the images or *caityas* two kinds of *sarīras*: 1. The relics of the Great Teacher; 2. The *Gāthā* of the chain of causation." The *Gāthā* is:

Ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetus teśām tathāgato hy avadat |
Teśām ca yo nirodha evam vādī mahaśramaṇah ||

This verse was also commonly inscribed on clay votives throughout the Buddhist world.⁷

6 A publication for Newar *saṃgha* ritualists lists materials needed and an outline for over 125 "major rituals" (R.K. Vajracarya 1981).

7 See note 20.

Early texts and archaeological records link *stūpa* worship with Śākyamuni Buddha's life and especially the key venues in his religious career. The tradition eventually recognized a standard "Eighth Great *Caityas*" for pilgrimage and veneration (Tucci 1988), a point our Newar publication alludes to. *Stūpa* or *caitya* worship thus became the chief focus of Buddhist ritual activity linking veneration of the Buddha's "sacred traces" (Falk 1977) to an individual's attention to managing *karma* destiny and mundane well-being. The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing around 690 A.D. noted a variety of forms and traditions:

The priests and laymen in India make *caityas* or images with earth, or impress the Buddha's image on silk or paper, and worship it with offerings wherever they go. Sometimes they build *stūpas* of the Buddha by making a pile and surrounding it with bricks ... This is the reason why the *sūtras* praise in parables the merit of making images or *caityas* as unspeakable ... as limitless as the seven seas, and good rewards will last as long as the coming four births. The detailed account of this matter is found in the separate *sūtras*. (Takakusu 1982 ed.: 150–1)

The *Sṛṅga Bherī Avadāna* is of this textual genre.

*

Throughout history, Buddhist writers have advanced many levels of understanding to explain *stūpa* veneration. First, a *stūpa* is a site marking supernatural celestial events associated with the Tathāgata and for remembering the Buddha through joyful devotional celebration. The classical Pali *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* describes the origins of the first veneration directed to Śākyamuni's relics (Rhys-Davids 1969: 130–1):

And when the body of the Exalted One had been burnt up, there came down streams of water from the sky and extinguished the funeral pyre ... and there burst forth streams of water from the storehouse of waters [beneath the earth], and extinguished the funeral pyre ... The Mallas of Kushinara also brought water scented with all kinds of perfumes ... surrounded the bones of the Exalted One in their council hall with a lattice work of spears, and with a

rampart of bows; and there for seven days they paid honor, and reverence, and respect, and homage to them with dance, and song, and music, and with garlands and perfumes ...

A prominent Hīnayāna *sutta* theme is the celestial wonders visible at *caityas*. As Nagasena explains in the *Milindapañha* (IV,8,51):

Some women or some man of believing heart, able, intelligent, wise, endowed with insight, may deliberately take perfumes, or a garland, or a cloth, and place it on a *caitya*, making the resolve: 'May such and such a wonder take place!' Thus is it that wonders take place at the *caitya* of one entirely set free (Rhys-Davids 1963: II, 175).

The subsequent elaborations on *stūpa*'s ritual in Buddhist history are extensive: a "power place" tapping the relic's Buddha presence (Schopen 1987: 196) and healing power; a site to earn merit through veneration (Lamotte 1988: 415); a monument marking the conversation and control of *nāgas* and *yakṣas* (Bloss 1973: 48–9). Only the Theravāda *Vinaya* omits instructions to monks on how to construct and make offerings at *stūpas* (Bureau 1962; cf. Schopen 1989), and the archaeological record shows that *stūpas* were frequently built in the center of *vihāra* courtyards (Seckel 1964: 132–4), often by monks themselves (Snellgrove 1973: 410), a custom still ubiquitous in Nepal. I-Tsing's account illustrates the monastic focus on *stūpa* in the *saṅgha*'s communal life.

In India priests perform the worship of a *caitya* and ordinary service late in the afternoon or at the evening twilight. All the assembled priests come out of the gate of their monastery, and walk three times around a *stūpa*, offering incense and flowers. They all kneel down, and one of them who sings well begins to chant hymns describing the virtues of the Great Teacher ... [and] in succession returns to the place in the monastery where they usually assemble. (Takakusu 1982 ed.: 152)

In the Mahāyāna schools, the *stūpa* came to symbolize other ideas: of Buddhahood's omnipresence (Snellgrove and Skorupsky 1977);⁸ a

8 A recent description of the *stūpa*'s symbolic evolution reflects concisely the developments in Vajrayāna philosophy that endure in the Nepalese context:

center of *sūtra* revelation (Schopen 1975); a worship center guaranteeing rebirth in Sukhāvatī (Williams 1989); and a form showing the unity of the five elements with Buddha nature (Rimpoche 1990; Seckel 1964). A passage from the *Pañcarakṣa* states that those worshipping relic *caityas* and chanting *dhāraṇīs* will make themselves immune from diseases of all kinds (Lewis 1994a). Later Buddhists identified *stūpas* as the physical representation of the *dharmakāya* in the *trikāya* schema⁹ and expanded the possible sacra deposited to include his words in textual form (*sūtra*, *dhāraṇī*, *mantra*) (Seckel 1964: 103), and the remains of exemplary human bodhisatvas (Mumford 1989).

The great Mahāyāna *sūtra*, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, explicitly states that relic worship itself is linked to the great *upāya* manifestation of the Buddha's dying, i.e. by seeming to pass away, he induces spiritual self-examination on the part of the living (Pye 1978: 58). Relic veneration at *stūpas* maintains for the devout a continued connection with that compassionate action and its effect:

By skillful means I manifest nirvana
 Though I am really not extinct ...
 They all look on me as extinct
 And everywhere worship my relics,
 All cherishing tender emotions
 As their hearts begin to thirst with hope.

(Quoted in Pye 1978: 58)

Gregory Schopen has shown that the *stūpa/caitya* cult was well established by the time of the Mahāyāna's emergence. The first Ma-

Whereas the *stūpa* in the earlier tradition .. is the sign and symbol of a Buddha's departure into final *nirvāṇa*, the *mandala* by contrast represents the continual activity of Buddhahood on behalf of living beings ... In later Indian Buddhist tradition, the *stūpa* was adapted to this newer symbolism ... with the great *stūpas* of Nepal with the eyes which look forth over the dome and with cosmic Buddha manifestations enshrined at the points of the compass ... Thus the later *stūpa*, like the *mandala* .. at the center which a deity sits enthroned, is the sacred sphere of beneficent activity. (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977: 13)

9 A modern Tibetan explanation of *stūpa* symbolism further expands this multiplexity by relating them to the *trikāya* theory of Buddhahood: Buddha images represent the *nirmanakāya*, texts the *sambhogakāya*, *stūpas* the *dharmakāya*. All are said to be *upāyas* for Buddhists who seek both *pūṇya* and *prajñā*. Offerings to the *dharmakāya* yield the greatest *pūṇya* (Rimpoche 1990).

hāyāna *sūtras* (e.g. *Saddharmapundarīka*; *Prajñāpāramitā*) clearly seek to redefine and reinterpret the *caitya*'s origin and higher meaning, the Mahāyāna equivalent of the Biblical "new wine in old bottles". What characterizes the key difference between Hīnayāna and emerging Mahāyāna lineages was the loyalty devotees were urged to show, respectively, to either *stūpas* enshrining Buddha's bodily relics or *stūpas* marking sites where *sūtras* revealing *Buddhavācana* were taught or venerated (Schopen 1975: 168–9). It is the latter that for the Mahāyāna is the most prestigious and most potent for earning the greatest merit. A Gilgit text dramatically describes how even modest *stūpa* building is infinitely superior to making lavish material offerings of other sorts (Bentor 1988).

The *Saddharmapundarīka* also places great emphasis on making and venerating *caityas*. Its exalted, utopian vision of Buddhist civilization features a landscape dominated by these monuments:

There are also bodhisattvas
 Who, after the Buddha's passage into extinction,
 Shall make offerings to his relics.
 Further, I see sons of the Buddhas
 Making stūpa shrines
 As numberless as Ganges' sands,
 With which to adorn the realms and their territories,
 Jeweled stūpas to the lovely height ...,
 Every individual stūpa shrine
 Having on it a thousand banners, ...
 So that the realms and their territories ...
 Are of a most refined beauty. (Hurvitz 1976: 10)

The *Lotus* exalts gem-encrusted *stūpas*,¹⁰ *stūpas* of immense size, and musical veneration at the monuments (*ibid.*, 39). The most valued *stūpa* is one encasing the *Lotus* itself and those in this category should

10 X. Liu has shown how the paraphernalia of Buddhist *stūpas*, shrines, *vihāras*, and temple building itself contributed significantly to overland Indo-Chinese trade by Kushan times (Liu 1988: 100). Of particular importance were the offerings of (Chinese) silk and the (Indian) seven jewels – gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, pearl, red coral, agate – including the building of "seven-jewelled *stūpas*." These were described as the best of offerings. (p. 97) The *caitya* in the *Śṛṅga Bheri* story is transformed into a "jewelled *caitya*."

be decorated with and called a “Seven-Jeweled *stūpa*.” The text asserts that all who make *stūpas* achieve the Buddha Path (*ibid.*, 39) and that those who worship the “Seven-Jeweled” are close to complete enlightenment (*anuttarasamyakasam̄bodhi*). Chapter Eleven, dedicated to the apparition of a jeweled *stūpa*, depicts Śākyamuni instructing followers to build *stūpas* wherever the devotess to the *Lotus* dwell: “Wherever these good men and good women sit, or stand, or walk, there one should erect a *stūpa*, and all gods and men should make offerings to it, as if it were a *stūpa* of the Buddha himself (*ibid.*, 254).” These places, *bodhimando veditavyaḥ* “Platforms of the Path” (*ibid.*, 255), mark sites where the *Lotus* has been stored, read, recited, interpreted, copied, or practiced; they are equated with the sites where Buddhas have achieved enlightenment, taught, and passed to *paranirvāṇa*.

One final and recently-noted dimension to *stūpa* veneration was a votive/mortuary aspect (Schopen 1987): certain Buddhists, and especially monks (Schopen 1989), apparently had their own ashes deposited in small votive *caityas*, often arranged close to a Buddha relic *stūpa* (Schopen 1991a; 1991b; 1992a). These structures perhaps established a means for perpetual *puṇya*-generation for the deceased. The *caitya* creation in the *Śrṅga Bherī Avadāna* may perhaps be related to this custom and other Tibetan Buddhist mortuary traditions using cremation ash and bone.¹¹

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11 Eva Dargyay's study of popular Buddhist practices in Zanskar (Western Tibet) includes the construction of a small *stūpa* using cremation ashes and bones; this and other typical lay rituals after death (image making and text copying) have a three-fold purpose: "... to let the previously deceased attain to the path of liberation; to purge the defilements of the living ones; and to ensure the future prosperity and power of one's dynasty" (Dargyay 1986: 87). Other Tibetan areas also preserve this cultic use of monks' and layfolks' cremation remains (Schopen 1992). Schopen's speculation on the congruence between *stūpa* and *tīrtha* is supported by the living Newar Buddhist traditions: *Avadāna* tales link *tīrthas* to Buddhist saints and the conversation of *nāgas* (Lewis 1984: 62); Newar texts specify the necessity of Buddhist *stūpas* being established at proper *tīrthas*; and the performance of Buddhist *śraddha* rituals can involve the dispersal of ashes at such venues in the first year of mourning (Lewis 1984: 326–330; 383–389).

Centered in practice upon the doctrine of *upāya*, Mahāyāna Buddhism cultivated cultural multivalence that converges literally and figuratively at *stūpas*. Asanga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi* lists ten progressive ritual practices at *caityas*.¹² The Khotanese *Book of Zambasta* links *stūpa* veneration to the cultivation of *pāramitās* (Emmerick 1968: 157). The Vajrayāna tradition also utilized in the *stūpa* as a *mandala* and a model for visualization meditation. In the Nepalese-Tibetan Vajrayāna traditions, these directional points also have esoteric correlates in the human body itself. Thus, it is with these myriad understandings that Buddhist virtuosi as well as others at all levels of aspiration have circumambulated *stūpas*.

Symbiotically, great regional *stūpas* were pivotal in the social history of Buddhism: these monuments became magnets attracting *vihāra* building and votive construction, for local *pūjā* and pilgrimage. The economics of Buddhist devotionalism at these centers generated income for local *saṅghas*, artisans, and merchants (Liu 1987), an alliance basic to Buddhism throughout its history (Dehejia 1972; Lewis 1993d). Thus, *stūpa* veneration was the most important activity that unified entire Buddhist communities¹³, especially (since I-Tsing's time) on full moon and eighth lunar days. At these geographical centers arrayed around the symbolic monument, diverse devotional exertions, textual/doctrinal studies, and devotees' mercantile pursuits could all prosper in synergistic style. The regional *Mahācaitya* complexes, with their interlinked components – *vihāras* with land endowments, votive/pilgrimage centers, markets, state support, etc. – represent central fixtures in Buddhist civilization. Our text contributes to the centripetal forces that drew Buddhists toward such *caityas'* sacred precincts.

12 Asanga's list of ten Mahāyāna rituals requires the resort to a *caitya*, with or without relics (Poussin 1937: 281–282).

13 This is the place where the vision of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*'s "ekayāna" would be manifest. For over the past fifty years, the harmonious merging of Tibetan Buddhists with Nepalese Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna devotees has been visible at Svayambhū, the great hilltop *stūpa* (Bechert 1992: 186). The supreme importance the tradition accorded to their *caitya* complexes is reflected in the extreme karma penalties incurred from disrespecting, damaging, or destroying them (Schopen 1987: 208).

III.

Notes on *Stūpa* and *Caityas* in the Kathmandu Valley

Many Newar *vihāras* contain ancient, worn, oft-whitewashed courtyard monuments that are known in the vernacular as “Aśoka *Caitya*”.¹⁴ They are usually located directly opposite the main shrine’s entranceway. Legends in the city of Patan recount Aśoka’s daughter Carumati establishing the largest *stūpas* there (Snellgrove 1987: 366; Slusser 1982: 277). Although it is impossible to authenticate or disprove these popular assertions, the classical connection between Aśokan *stūpas* and Buddhist history in the Kathmandu Valley must be noted.

The Mahāyāna history of Nepal, claiming origins in earlier *yugas*, also centers on the Valley’s great *stūpas*. Texts recount the Svayambhū *stūpa*’s origins – and the entire Nepal Valley’s establishment – as the product of Mahāyāna hierophony and the compassionate actions of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.¹⁵ The epigraphic evidence is that “Svayambhū Mahācaitya” was founded in the Licchavi period (400–879 A.D.) in the early fifth century (Slusser 1982: 174; Riccardi 1979). Today, this hilltop *stūpa* over twenty-five meters in diameter is surrounded by five monasteries and is quite regularly linked to the Buddhist festival year of Kathmandu City (Lewis 1984; Lewis 1992c)

14 Emphasizing his building thousands of *stūpas* throughout his dominions, early textual traditions uphold King Aśoka (ruled 272–236 B.C.) as the most exemplary Indian Buddhist layman and elevated him as the archetypal royal patron (Lamotte 1988: 243ff.; Strong 1983). Aśoka’s legend and his missions are invoked across the Theravāda and Mahāyāna frontier zones (Nepal, Burma, Thailand, and Sri Lanka) to link these areas to the golden age and holy land of early Buddhism. The Aśoka *Avadāna* is well-represented in Newar collections and among the longest separate *avadānas* (Novak 1986: 8).

15 The Sanskrit source for the Svayambhū *Purāṇa* has been edited by G. C. Shastri 1894. This text, as yet untranslated into English, recounts a whole series of stories linking Mañjuśrī and the *Nāmasaṃgīti* to the Svayambhū *stūpa* and Nepalese Buddhism (Pal 1977: 188). This connection is indicated from another source: in the Sanskrit version of Aśvaghoṣa’s *Buddhacarita* translated by Cowell, the last four chapters were missing in the Nepalese manuscript. As a result, a Newar *vajrācārya* named Amṛtananda composed replacements from various sources. These chapters composed in 1830 A. D. assert that Śākyamuni taught the *Śrṅgabherī vrata* and the *lakṣaṇaitya vrata* in Lumbini in his last journey before his *paranirvāṇa* (Cowell 1969 ed.: 199).

and to all Buddhists in the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding regions through the twelve-year Samyaka festival (Shakya 1979; Lewis 1994b; Bechert 1992). Svayambhū once had extensive land endowments traditionally dedicated to its upkeep (Shakya 1978) and in many respects the history of regional Buddhism is embedded in the layers of this *stūpa*'s successive iconography, patronage, and restoration.

The other great *stūpa* of Nepal is Bauddha.¹⁶ In recent years, Bauddha has become the focal monument of resident Tibetan Buddhists and there are Tibetan literary sources that link its founding to the introduction of the Dharma to Tibet (Levi 1905 (II), 7; Snellgrove 1957: 98–9; Dowman 1973). Local traditions record the establishment of a great *stūpa* in the present location northeast of Kathmandu City dating from Licchavi times and there is a Newari origin myth as well (Levi 1905 (II): 7–8; Slusser 1982: 277).

In the Kathmandu Valley, other *stūpas* exist in great numbers and they remain the main venues for daily public Buddhist observances. There are large *stūpas* that mark the old directional boundaries of Patan and Kathmandu. In courtyards, at riverside *tīrthas*, and around temples in most Newar settlements, there are also thousands of more modest family votive *caityas*. The ubiquity of *caityas* here can be illustrated by the Asan Tol neighborhood in Kathmandu, where a survey of all free-standing religious shrines (numbering over 300) revealed that one half were *caityas* (Lewis 1984: 116).

There has been a succession of *caitya* styles in Nepalese history. Most so-called “Aśoka *caityas*” come in a variety of shapes and sizes, most very worn from devotional ablutions and whitewashings. *Stūpas* dated to the Licchavi period (such as those published by Pal (1974: 16) from Dhwāka Bāhā, Kathmandu) depict standing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas surmounted by small *stūpas*, indicating early Mahāyāna influences. Since the nineteenth century, the commonly-preferred design features seated directional Buddhas surmounted by a *stūpa*, with some also adding the particular bodhisattva “sons” standing beneath. In a recent study, over eight standard designs are still recognized today (Macdonald and Stahl 1980: 144).¹⁷

16 The most common Newari name for this *stūpa* complex is Khāsti. Slusser discusses this and alternative usages (1982: 277).

17 These forms as pictured differ from the classical eight styles associated with

Mention must also be made of Newar cast-metal *stūpas*. Nepalese artisans were famous across the Himalayan region for their skills in lost wax casting, including *stūpas* and other images (Bue 1985; Bue 1986; Heller 1986). The most notable among them are the Uṣṇiṣavijaya *caityas*¹⁸ made for the elderly's *jamko samskāra* (Pal 1977) and the Samyaka *caitya* that is required for sponsorship of the greatest Newar *dāna* patronage ceremony (Shakya 1980).

Still other Newar *caityas* are small and usually impermanent in nature. There are sand *caityas* laymen mould by riversides to make merit, most commonly for certain *śraddha pūjās*, but also at the time of eclipses, and during the special Newar month of Guṇlā. Another ephemeral Newar *caitya* is made of clay that laymen fashion using special molds. These miniature clay images can be used for building the interiors of permanent monuments as well as for disposal by the riverside. This practice, called *dyah thāyegu* (Newari: "making the deity"), requires the use of black clay; observed during Guṇla, the final votive assemblage must be empowered by special rites of merit dedication (Lewis 1993c).¹⁹ Several *vratas* also require the manufacturing of these images (Lewis 1989a) and the *Śrṅga Bherī Avadāna* can be read aloud as part of these observances. (See discussion of the *lakṣacaitya* in the next section.)

Finally, Newar Buddhists make evanescent *basma caityas* with relic ashes at riverside *tīrthas* following the cremation rites (cf. Dargyay 1986: 182–5). Vajrācārya ritualists also make a "*durgatiparisosodhana caitya*" to fix in place the *dhāraṇī* in a Buddhist *pindā* ritual of mourning, symbolizing the text's presence as witness. The relic tradition of the *Śrṅga Bherī* perhaps can be related to the already-cited ancient tradition of merging cremation relics with molded sand or miniature clay *caityas* and clay-inscribed *dhāraṇīs*, a custom once ubiquitous in South Asia (Schopen 1985; Schopen 1987: 198ff.) and still

the early eight pilgrimage places of ancient Indic Buddhism. See Tucci 1988: 21–23.

18 The *uṣṇiṣavijaya stūpa* has not been found elsewhere in South Asia to date and may be a Newar innovation (Pal 1977: 186). The *Sādhanamalla* states that *Uṣṇiṣavijaya* "resides in the womb of a *caitya*" (Bhattacharya 1958: 215).

19 Tucci (1988: 57ff.) lists several Tibetan variants of the same process. I-Tsing notes the existence of this custom in 690 A. D. (Takakusu 1982 ed. 150–151). A recent catalog of Newar Buddhist manuscripts also lists a text called the *Caitya Pangava* as a manual for these rituals (Novak 1986: 13).

practiced in modern Tibet, Nepal, and Thailand (Lester 1987: 116–7).²⁰

IV.

Notes on the Text, Newar Contextual Application, and Buddhist Themes

Compiler: *Badrī Ratna Bajrācārya*

Suffering declining patronage, Hindu state discrimination, and anti-Mahāyāna missionizing by the revivalist Theravadin monks (Kloppenberg 1977; Tewari 1983; Lewis 1984), the Newar Buddhist *saṅgha* has struggled to survive over the last century. The author, a Kathmandu Vajrācārya by birth and religious training, has been a prominent force seeking to overcome these circumstances by establishing a school for training young Vajrācārya men, giving public lectures, and by organizing a host of traditional ritual programs in *vihāras* and other pilgrimage sites, including *vajrayāna* initiations. He has published myriad booklets to support each of these, including the text translated here.

This booklet represents a literary rendering of Bajrācārya's most renowned local role as Kathmandu's storyteller extraordinaire. Whether in one of the town's *vihāras* or in the *Kāṣṭamandapa*, the great public assembly building from which Kathmandu derives its name, Badrī's sessions in the 1980s drew many hundreds to hear his dramatic, multi-vocalic, and clearly elucidated doctrinal presentations as he read from and expounded upon popular *avadānas* and *jātakas*. The simple language of the printed story and the repetitions clearly illustrate the storyteller's expository manner.

20 Moulded miniature *stūpas* were also made as empowered souvenirs for pilgrims who visited great *stūpas*. Such votive traditions are evident in studies of Central Asia (Taddei 1970), Tibet (Tucci 1932), Nepal (Lewis 1993c), India (Desai 1986), Burma (Mya 1961), Thailand (Griswold 1965), and Śrivijaya (O'Connor 1974, 1975; Sukatno 1984; Lamb 1964). The modern Thai enthusiasm for amulets is a survival of this tradition (Tambiah 1984).

Notes on the Text and the Compiler's Introduction

The compiler in his introduction notes his source as the Sanskrit *Citravīmsati Avadāna*, one of the popular collections of Mahāyāna-style stories preserved in Kathmandu Valley *vihāra* libraries (Mitra 1882; Takaoka 1981: 2). Separate texts containing this story alone exist in Newar collections, and the versions show plot and character variations (Novak 1986).

To introduce the text, Bajrācārya recounts the basic teachings of the *Svayambhū Purāna*, the creation story of the Kathmandu Valley as a Mahāyāna Buddhist hierophony.²¹ While the *Purāna* represents itself as spoken by Śākyamuni Buddha, its content reaches back to earlier world ages and a succession of previous Buddhas. It reveals the creation of Nepal as a center of Mahāyāna hierophony and finally recounts how a civilization was arranged around it by the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. The compiler merely outlines this sequence to show that the *Svayambhū stūpa* (the enduring site of this hierophony) and the distinctive musical veneration described in the text date from an earlier world era, the time of Newar – and simultaneously Mahāyāna – origins. This is domestication *par excellence*, and even this *purāna* itself was likely imported from Khotan (Brough 1948). He also thanks his patrons, a Newar farming family with the surname Maharjan, who sponsored publication in memory of the husband's parents. The father's portrait, blowing on his wooden flute, adorns the first page, illustrating the typical scenario of lay memorial merit-making underwriting a new recension of a Buddhist text.

Language and Translation

The twenty-four page printed text is written in simply-constructed modern Newari, with Sanskrit used sparingly for Buddhist terms. Not surprisingly, the style is that of a storyteller, with intermittent resort to re-quoting dialogue, a device that enhances the dramatic oral effect. The printed text is quite remarkable in this genre for its fairly consistent transliterations, especially in the faithful renderings of Buddhist terms. The translation below aims to capture the story-

21 This starting point is typical of many of the modern books, regardless of the subject matter. For another example of this, see Slusser 1982: 420–421.

teller's effect; the paragraph breaks in the translation generally match those in the book.

Finally noted must be the insertion of two short devotional additions to the printed work. The first is a one-page Sanskrit poem, "Stotra in Praise of the Eight *Caityas*," that reveres the usual eight body relic *caityas* of ancient India (Tucci 1988: 23) as well as *dhātu caitya* sites.²² The second is the one-page insertion of a devotional hymn that can be sung by a musical procession. Although Bajrācārya's introduction does not refer to either, both are clearly appended to assist devotees wishing to use the book as they perform their ritual veneration at the *Svayambhū stūpa*.

Summary of the Narrative

In tracing the outline of the account, distinctive themes emerge regarding the Mahāyāna Buddhist adaptation to later South Asian society. The story begins with Śākyamuni, but in the characteristic embedded *avadāna* style turns quickly backward in time by invoking the age when Vipaśvī Buddha lived. It is he who tells the focal story.

The story recounts the multiple-lifetime destinies of a royal couple, with the devoted moral aspiration of the queen linking her fate in *samsāra* to her husband the king. The latter, due to the bad *karma* earned from his avid hunting and despite his wife's forcefully eloquent moral instruction on *ahimsā*, dies and is reborn: first in purgatory and then as a buffalo fated to be, in literal karmic retribution, cruelly killed by wild beasts. After the death of her husband, the queen (the text tersely reports²³) commits *sati*. But she is reborn as

22 Regarding evidence for the emergence of distinctive relic *stūpa* Buddhist ritualism and book *stūpa* ritualism, see Schopen 1975. The Sanskrit text printed here is the same as that published by Bagchi (1941: 233) and was also extant in Chinese.

23 This practice mentioned in a Buddhist text seems anomalous, especially here so soon after an eloquent statement on *ahimsā*. Yet one quite unavoidably must point out that this *avadāna* supports the logic of widow immolation: without the Queen committing *sati*, the entire transformation and miraculous Bodhisatva hierophony cannot take place. Other examples from the later *avadāna* literatures must be surveyed to evaluate this aspect of Mahāyāna Buddhism's domestication in later Indian society. There were apparently opposing opinions regarding suicide across the Mahāyāna literature, with *avadānas* illustrating both views (Ku 1991: 157ff.; Yun-hua 1965).

Rūpavatī, a daughter in a pious Brāhmaṇa family. This high caste rebirth is a reward for her moral character.

Rūpavatī's bond to the former king also endures when she matures, refuses marriage proposals, and acquires that very buffalo to herd. One day she is visited by a Bodhisattva named Supāraga²⁴ who reveals to her the workings of rebirth destiny and gives her instructions that she follows exactly when her buffalo meets its violent end: she buries the bones in a sand *caitya* and uses one horn to offer water to the *caitya* while blowing on the other.

This "five-fold" pūjā²⁵ sets off a cosmic transformation reminiscent of the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* and also quite typical in the Mahāyāna texts: a jeweled, light-emanating *caitya* descends from the sky, merges with the sand *caitya*, and causes an entire *caitya* complex to appear on the spot.²⁶ Equally miraculous, a lad emerges from the buffalo horn and after the reunion he reveals how his former wife's

24 Supāraga is not listed by the standard iconographic sources: the *Sādhanamālā* (Bhattacharya 1968; Bhattacharya 1958), Malleman (1975), or Getty (1988). Monier-Williams (1228) lists a reference only to the *Jātakamālā*. Tale XIV of this work contains a tale of Supāraga the ship captain who acts as a bodhisattva navigator who guides seagoing merchants through a great storm (Speyer 1971: 124–134). His "Act of Truth" (Brown 1972) saves the ship and crew.

25 The term used in the text is *pañcopacāra pūjā*. In Newari usage it refers to five offerings: flowers, incense, light, balm, food (Lewis 1984: 193).

26 The magical *stūpa* apparition is a motif in other Mahāyāna *avadāna* traditions. Also quite influential in Newar Buddhism (as was the case in other parts of India) is the local contextualization of the "Mahasattva and Tigress" story. In the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, the tale is revealed in the following way:

Gautama Buddha, wandering about in the region of the Pancala with his disciples, arrived at a beautiful spot in the woods. He asked Ānanda to prepare a seat for him, and said that he would show them the relics of the great *bodhisattvas* who had performed difficult feats. He struck the ground with his hands. The earth shook, and a *stūpa* made of gems, gold, and silver rose up. Buddha directed Ananda to open the *stūpa*. It contained a golden sarcophagus covered with pearls. Ananda saw some bones, which were as white as snow and the white water lily. All paid obeisance to the relics. Buddha then told the story of the hero ...

(As summarized by Dayal 1932: 182)

This *avadāna* has also been domesticated at a *caitya* southeast of the Kathmandu Valley, a day's walk from the capitol. The story, called "Mahāsattva Rāja Kumār," is often depicted on Newar *vihāra* frescoes and also in a recent comic book.

merit transferred to him secured his release both from purgatory and from his buffalo destiny. In thanksgiving, he then worships the jeweled *caitya*, chants praises to Tārā, reads *sūtras*, and blows the buffalo horn. The story ends more happily yet when the couple again returns to the kingdom's throne and promotes this style of *caitya* veneration.

The Text's Context and Concluding Buddhological Observations

The prefatory opening lines of the *Śṛṅga Bherī Avadāna* set forth the text's clear message: veneration of *caityas* employing a musical procession yields a good destiny for oneself (fortune in this life, next rebirth in a noble family) and for departed relatives. No evil destinies will befall the deceased if the rite is done in their name(s).²⁷ The text asserts that going for refuge at a *caitya* leads to a purified mind, attaining *bodhi*, securing rebirth as Indra; the building and maintenance of *stūpas* yields even greater merit still.²⁸

The special significance of this story is in the series of linkages asserted between the Mahāyāna *bhakti* orientation and *caitya* veneration: the karma forces released are especially amplified. More striking still is the display of powers by the celestial bodhisattvas (Tārā, Supāraga) in connection with *caitya* veneration. A curious feature of the *avadāna* is that the relics interred in the *stūpa* are those of a mere buffalo, not a saint; but even these, when shaped into the archetypal Buddhist *sacra* and worshipped, yield a wondrous hierophony and miraculous individual destiny.

The Newar compiler asserts in the introduction that the old custom based upon the text was for devotees to venerate all *stūpas* in the Kathmandu Valley with buffalo horn-playing *bājans* for a full month twice each year.²⁹ In the Kāli Yuga, he continues, Newar Buddhists

27 The same kinds of rewards are recounted in the Khotanese *Pradakṣina Sūtra* (Bailey 1974), a text not found under this name in Nepal.

28 Unlike the *avadānas* (especially the *Avadānaśataka*) analyzed by Strong (1979), the core story here does not contain a *pranidhāna* (a vow for enlightenment) for Buddhahood or saint's status, but for more mundane results. In the framing narrative, however, Śākyamuni asserts that *caitya* worship can yield these spiritual attainments.

29 These months are the mid-summer Gurplā and the fall Kacchālā. The small Buddhist community in the former capital Bhaktapur still organizes morning Gurplā *bājan* processions that visit all *stūpas* within the town. These are led by devotees blowing buffalo horns (Levy 1990; Toffin 1984).

now merely visit only Svayambū with such a procession during only one month, Guṇlā (Lewis 1993c). Today, in fact, the Kāli Yuga in Nepal has eroded the horn-blowing tradition so that veneration in this style is sponsored mainly by families in the first year of mourning and usually by widows.

The regular performance of *Śṛṅga Bherī caitya* veneration is now made by a special *vihāra guṇhi* at Svayambhū: several young boys circumambulate the Svayambhū hilltop complex each morning during Guṇlā. Their service is usually contracted for by families at the start of the month in a short ceremony dedicating the merit to the deceased. The full moon day of Guṇlā is usually chosen for the family to accompany the musical procession.

The Newar contextual adaptation of the story involves its use in other, optional observances. Newar *upāsakas* also observe a custom called *lakṣacaitya* ("100,000 *Caityas*"): as the title implies, families mould a vast number of miniature *caityas* over a given period and celebrate the completion with a special ritual (Pal 1977; Lewis 1984). An old tradition still recalled in Newar texts utilized this story as part of a larger two-day *lakṣacaitya vrata*.³⁰

A final point on the domestication of Mahāyāna Buddhism: although some philosophical texts establish the radical individualism of karmic operation and the superiority of the renunciatory lifestyle over the domestic householder, this Mahāyāna *avadāna* suggests that the celestial bodhisattvas' powers are available to reunite husbands and wives in their *samsāra* destiny, a theme also found in early Hīnayāna literature as well.³¹ The *Śṛṅga Bherī* text and its enduring Ne-

30 There are Newar ritual guidebooks describing this still-popular practice. For a translation of the *Lakṣacaityasamutpatti*, a detailed Sanskrit text that was doubtless the source of Newar tradition, see Tissa (1974). This work describes the origins of the *lakṣacaitya vrata*, and indicates that after the 100,000 *stūpas* are made, a (tantric) *kumārī pūjā* a must be performed. In Nepal, this ritual is performed only by higher caste Newars (Lewis 1984: 223–226).

This *lakṣacaitya pūjā* is a common subject for Newar devotional paintings over the past five hundred years. Typically, a large *stūpa* with *Uṣṇīṣavijayā* will be at the center, with portraits of participating family members arrayed around a multitude of small *caityas*.

31 This wish for multi-lifetime conjugal connection goes back to the earliest days of the tradition. In the *Anguttara Nikāya* (II, 61), an elderly husband Nakul Pitā addressed Śākyamuni, "Blessed one, when my wife was brought to my house, she was a mere girl, and I was only a boy. I cannot recall having been

war practice suggest that this was yet another hope and aspiration devout Buddhist householders brought to their building and veneration of *stūpas*.

V.
Translation

Śrṅga Bherī (The Buffalo Horn Blowing Tale)
Kathmandu: Smṛti Press, 1979.

So I have heard: Once Lord Śākyamuni was dwelling on Mount Grddhakūṭa in Rājagrha city accompanied by 1300 fellow Bhikṣus, Bodhisattvas and Mahāsattvas.

At that time also the gods and human beings all gathered there to listen intently to the discourses delivered by the sage of the Śākya clan, Lord of the world.

From the audience, Śāriputra then arose and went close to the Tathāgata, knelt down before him with folded hands, and said, “O Lord! Be so kind as to tell me about those who were liberated

unfaithful to her, not even in thought. Blessed One, we both want to live together in this way, in this life and in our future lives.” The wife expresses the same opinions (Wijayaratna 1989: 169). This same view is expressed in the *Buddhacarita* through the speech of Śākyamuni’s wife Yasodharā:

He does not see that husband and wife are both consecrated in sacrifices, and both purified by the performance of the rites ... and both destined to enjoy the same results afterwards ...

I have no such longing for the joy of heaven, nor is that hard even for common people to win if they are resolute; but my one desire is how he my beloved may never leave me either in this world or the next ... (Cowell 1969 ed.: 88)

But the hope for multi-lifetime relationships in *samsāra* was not universally encouraged in the Buddhist literature, however. The author of the *Sikṣāsamuccaya*, for example, derides the view, quoting the *Ugradatta-pariprcchā* (Bendall and Rouse 1971: 83):

“The Bodhisattva in the presence of his wife must realize three thoughts ... She is my companion for passion and dalliance, but not for the next world; my companion at meat and drink, but not for the fruition of the maturing of my acts. She is the companion of my pleasure, not of my pain ... Three other thoughts are these: that a wife must be regarded as an obstacle to virtue, meditation, and to wisdom. And yet three more: she is like a thief, a murderer, or a guardian of hell.”

through *caitya* worship performed along with the playing of musical instruments, including the buffalo horn."

Upon hearing this, Tathāgata Śākyamuni said to Śāriputra within the hearing of all the gods and human beings in the audience, "Verily, Verily, O Śāriputra! Emancipation obtained through *caitya* worship, performed with the blowing of buffalo horns, is illustrated in the following story:

In the distant past, the King Suvarṇaketu and his queen Hiranya-vatī lived happily in the city of Suvarṇavatī. The King had five sons from his queen Hiranya-vatī, namely: 1. Puṣpaketu 2. Ratnaketu 3. Śuryaketu 4. Dīpaketu 5. Chandraketu. The oldest son Puṣpaketu once went to his parents, paid them compliments, and asked for permission to go to Bandhumati city for listening to the discourses delivered by Vipaśvī Buddha. With their permission, he left Suvarṇavatī city for Bandhumati city.

Upon reaching Bandhumati city, Prince Puṣpaketu went to see Vipaśvī Tathāgata at a monastery. Kneeling down before Vipaśvī Buddha, Prince Puṣpaketu said, 'O Lord! Please tell me of those who were liberated through *caitya* worship performed while playing musical instruments, including the buffalo horn.'

Hearing this from the prince, the Buddha said, 'The month of Śrāvana is considered holy for *caitya* worship accompanied by music. For this, the month of Kārtikī is equally holy. During these two months, after ritual bathing in the morning, if one circumambulates *caityas* or *vihāras* playing drums, cymbals and blowing horns, one will accumulate good fortune and religious merit here in this life and be reborn hereafter in a noble family. If one circumambulates the *caitya* blowing horns and offers gifts in the name of a dead one, that one will avoid bad destinies and be reborn in a family of noble birth. And if a person seated in front of a *caitya* seeks refuge in the *Triratna* with a purified mind, that one will attain supreme enlightenment or be reborn hereafter in heaven to attain the title of Indra, King of Gods. Similarly if one whitewashes a *caitya* with lime, decorates it with flags and garlands, and worships with a fivefold offering (*pañcopacāra pūjā*), that one will accumulate a great deal of religious merit. O Prince! Please be attentive and let me now proceed to tell you how once one person was liberated through horn playing.'

Once there was a king named Simhaketu who ruled the city of Śasī-paṭṭana. The King had no consideration for the lives of other living

beings and every day visited the forest to hunt with his bow and arrow many different wild birds and beasts such as deer, tigers, and bears.

Unable to bear the daily sight of her husband taking the lives of wild birds and beasts in the forest, Queen Sūrakṣāṇī said to her husband one day, “O my Lord! Let me make a request of you. Please give up hunting the wild birds and beasts in the forest. Mind you! The wicked deed of taking the lives of living beings will subject you to a great deal of suffering in your future births. [She quoted the verses:]

Ahimsā is the best among knowledges,

The greatest of all teachings.

Ahimsā is the best among virtues,

The greatest of all meditations.

[Sūrakṣāṇī continued:] If men say they earnestly seek salvation, they should be non-violent in body, mind and speech toward all living beings. O My Lord! If you so wish, you may pronounce the names of the *Triratna* seeking refuge, worship a *cāitya* while saying prayers and circumambulating, give liberally to the *Bhikṣus*, the Brāhmaṇas, the *Ācāryas*, and show compassion to many suffering ones. By so doing, your happiness here and hereafter will be assured.”

Hearing this from the queen, the king replied, “Darling! What’s this you are saying? Don’t you know that one born in a royal family can take pleasure in hunting wild birds and beasts in the forest?”

Having listened to the king’s attitude, the queen still tried her best to convince him but could not stop him from hunting in the forest.

After a certain time, the king passed away and Sūrakṣāṇī received such a mental shock at his death that she immolated herself on her husband’s funeral pyre. Because of his wicked deed of so often hunting the wild birds and beasts in the forest, the king was consigned to purgatory and was afterwards reincarnated as a buffalo in the same city of Śāśīpaṭṭana. But Queen Sūrakṣāṇī as a result of her meritorious deed of sparing the lives of the living beings and of being chaste and faithful to her husband, was reincarnated as a woman in a certain Brāhmaṇ family in the same city of Śāśīpaṭṭana.

The Brāhmaṇ couple became very glad when she was born to them. They celebrated the name-giving ceremony of the baby girl in accordance with their custom. The name of Rūpavatī [meaning “Beautiful One”] was given to the child because she was very beauti-

ful. The baby was brought up with proper care and gradually she grew up like a lotus in a pond. When Rūpavatī became a mature girl, her father gave her the job of tending a buffalo in the forest.

Rūpavatī every day tended her buffalo, cleaned his shed, and took great care of him.

Because Rūpavatī was beautiful, many people came to propose marriage. Her parents discussed this and said to her eventually, "O Rūpavatī! Now you have come of age. People have come to us asking for you in marriage. Do you want to marry?"

Responding to her parents, the daughter said, "Dear Father and Mother, I do not want to be married. Please do not insist on it. I prefer staying unmarried here and devoting myself to you. I will not marry."

Hearing this from their daughter, they gave up the idea of giving their only daughter in marriage and she stayed at home unmarried.

One day Rūpavatī was in the forest as usual tending her buffalo. While she was sitting under a tree looking at the many-hued blossoms, listening to the sweet birdsongs, and smelling many colorful sweet-scented flowers, a Bodhisatva named Supāraga, emanating brilliant light from his body, descended from the sky and stood before her. He said, "O Rūpavatī! The buffalo you are tending was your husband in your previous birth. In his former existence, he hunted many birds and beasts in the forest. As a result of this, he is now reborn as a buffalo. For his past wicked deeds, the buffalo will be killed and devoured by the birds and beasts of the forest. O Rūpavatī! If you wish to assist the husband of your previous birth to attain a good destiny, collect the mortal remains of the buffalo after it is killed and devoured by the birds and beasts of the forest, then deposit them inside a sand *caitya*. One of the two horns of the buffalo may be used for offering water to the *caitya* and the other horn may be used as a trumpet at the time of circumambulating it." Having said this to Rūpavatī, Supāraga Bodhisattva disappeared miraculously.

Then Rūpavatī also remembered the facts of her previous birth and took greater care of the buffalo by taking it to the forest and feeding it nutritious grasses.

One day as usual, Rūpavatī was sitting under a tree while tending her buffalo. After eating grass the buffalo wandered off to drink water from a stream in the forest. At that time in an instant, tigers and lions came to attack the buffalo and tortured it to death. Then the

tigers, lions, bears, vultures and other birds devoured its flesh, leaving only the bones and two horns behind.

[At just this same time] Rūpavatī heard a strange sound made by the buffalo and then it did not come back as usual from the stream. Very much agitated, she went to the stream looking for the buffalo but did not find it. Instead, she saw only the dead animal's bones and two horns left behind. At the sight of the buffalo's bones and horns, Rūpavatī wept. Taking them affectionately in her arms, she said to herself, "What Supāraga Bodhisattva prophesied has come true." She then returned home with a tearful face and related to her parents all that had happened to her in the forest that day.

Upon hearing Rūpavatī's story, her parents comforted her, saying, "Enough, enough! Do not mourn the death of one buffalo very much. We will buy a new buffalo."

In response to her parents, the daughter cried, "Oh Mother and Father! No buffalo can be like the one that has been killed. You may buy a new buffalo but the new one cannot bring peace and consolation to my mind." The parents retorted, "Grieve no more over the dead one. It is of no use because the dead cannot be brought back to life. Get a hold of yourself!"

Then Rūpavatī went again to the streamside, collected all the pieces of bone, and buried them in a sand *caitya*, all as advised by Supāraga Bodhisattva. She next used one of the two horns of the buffalo for offering water to the *caitya* and the other for playing while circumambulating and while performing a *pañcopacāra pūjā*. She regularly worshipped the *caitya* in this way. One day during her *caitya* worship, while Rūpavatī was offering water with one of the horns and blowing the other, a bejewelled *caitya* appeared in the sky emitting radiant light in all directions. She was surprised and with folded hands turned to the sky in great reverence.

Then the *caitya* that appeared in the sky descended down to the earth and merged into the sand *caitya* in which the bones of the buffalo were buried. When the bejewelled *caitya* entered the sand *caitya*, the sand *caitya* was transformed into a bejewelled *caitya*.

Because of the presence of the *caitya* there, stone walls and other masonry constructions came into sight by themselves around the *caitya* to give it a look of a high-walled courtyard. Doorways and festoons also appeared, just as plants possessing different flowers and fruits started growing all around.

This is not all. From the horn of the buffalo which was used for blowing, a person came out who grew instantly into a young man. At that sight of the individual springing from the horn, Rūpavatī became very much surprised and said, "Who are you and where did you come from?"

Turning to the Brāhmaṇ lady, the person who emerged from the horn said, "How could you not recognize me, O faithful woman! You liberated your husband through your conjugal fidelity and pious charitable acts. O Rūpavatī! I have been able to come out of the horn; liberated on this day. It is all due to your accumulation of *punya*. Have you not known that in our former existence I was the king of this city and you were my queen Sūrakṣāṇī? Although you tried to prevent me from going to the forest to hunt birds and beasts, I insisted upon doing so. As a result of these wicked deeds, I was consigned to purgatory, subjected to great suffering. Ultimately I was reborn as a buffalo. Now I am liberated through your pious meritorious worshipping of a *caitya* accompanied by buffalo horn playing!"

Upon hearing this from the person emanating from the horn, Rūpavatī, said, "Oh! How fortunate I have been! As a result of the pious act of this *caitya* worship I have been able to end the separation and rejoin my husband." Jubilant, they both circumambulated the *caitya*. Then the person emanating from the horn pronounced the name of goddess Tārā and remained seated before the *caitya*. He recited prayers from a holy text while blowing on the horn. The whole of Śāśīpaṭṭana city echoed with the sound produced by the horn. The citizens of Śāśīpaṭṭana city heard the pleasant sound of the horn and assembled there.

All those who gathered around the *caitya* were taken aback to see Rūpavatī seated beside a handsome person and so they asked her who he was. At that time within the hearing of all, Rūpavatī related the whole story of how Supāraga Bodhisattva had prophesied strange events, how they had lived in their previous births as King Simhaketu and Queen Surakṣāṇī in Śāśīpaṭṭana, and what had happened in front of the sand *caitya*.

The people assembled there became very glad after hearing this and realized that the person emanating from the horn and the Brāhmaṇ lady were formerly their king and queen. Both of them were taken to the city in an elaborate, joyful procession. Then the person

emanating from the horn was given the name of Bhadra Śṛṅga and was enthroned as the king of the city.

Then King Bhadra Śṛṅga and Queen Rūpavatī ruled over the city of Śāśipatṭana happily. One day King Bhadra Śṛṅga invited the citizens to his palace to tell them the story of how his queen helped him be delivered from his sufferings in purgatory by her pious and charitable devotional actions and how he eventually succeeded in ascending to the throne of Śāśipatṭana for the well-being of the people.

King Bhadra Śṛṅga and Queen Rūpavatī lived happily for many years. King Bhadra Śṛṅga made it widely known to his countrymen how his wife delivered him from his sufferings in purgatory. He preached and propagated the significance and sanctity of *caitya* worship and reigned happily over the country.¹

This is what was told to Prince Puṣpaketu by Vipaśvī Buddha. After hearing this from Vipaśvī Buddha, Prince Puṣpaketu returned to Suvarṇapura and relayed to his parents the same story told to him by Vipaśvī Buddha.

Upon hearing the story from his son, the King Suvarṇaketu happily ruled over the country and performed the proper worship of *caityas*.² And this was told to Bhikṣu Śāriputra by the Lord Śākyamuni on Mount Gṛddhakūṭa.

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Figure 1: Free-standing *Caitya*.

This style shrine, with directional Buddhas surmounted by a small *stupa*, has been the most popular in the Kathmandu Valley over the past two centuries.



Figure 2: Veneration of a *Caitya*
Print showing Buddhist women offering morning *pūjā* to a neighborhood *caitya*.



Figure 3: Asoka *Caitya*

Photograph of Asan *Vihāra*, Kathmandu, showing the distinctive "Asoka *Caitya*" shrine in the courtyard, directly facing the main shrine room (*kwāhpāh dyah*). (Photograph by the author)



Figure 4: Cover of the Translated Booklet



Figure 5: The Srngabheri Transformation Scene

Line drawing made from an old framed painting located in a Svayambhū resthouse. The painting depicts the moment of the king's re-incarnation through the former wife's performance of the *pūjās* specified in the text. (Drawing by Joy C. Y. Lewis)



Figure 6: Gumiña Buffalo Horn *Bajan*

Drummers, cymbal players, and horn blowers circumambulate Svayambhū, domesticating the Śrṅga Bherī *Avadāna* each year during the month of Śrāvaṇa. (Photograph by the author, 1991)

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